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UNCLAS HANOI 000554

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INL/AAE; EAP/BCLTV; UNVIE FOR FISHER AND BARMON

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNODC CONCERN OVER VIETNAM FUNDING

REF: 02 Hanoi 2979

1. (U) This is an action request - see paragraph 8.
2. (U) UNODC country representative Dr. Doris Buddenberg contacted poloff on March 6 to express concern over Department's decision to reprogram USD 740,000 originally intended to fund UNODC's law enforcement project "Interdiction and Seizure Capacity Building with Special Emphasis on ATS and Precursors." Embassy continues to support the project, while understanding the apparent need for more urgent programming elsewhere. As a fallback, Embassy would support the suggestion of using USD 500,000 intended for the now moribund Song Ma project for this law enforcement project.
3. (U) Vietnam continues to face numerous challenges regarding the drug and crime situation, including: (1) the lack of financing resources for technical drug control and crime prevention activities; (2) the possible re-emergence of opium poppy cultivation; (3) growing drug trafficking and consumption problems; (4) rising crime concerns connected to drugs, such as corruption, money-laundering and trafficking in persons; and (5) restrictive internal policies regarding the sharing of drug intelligence information with foreign counterparts.
4. (U) Within the UNODC country program for Vietnam, law enforcement has always been - with support from the USG - an important component of drug control. Through law enforcement projects such as this one, the UN and donor agencies are in regular contact with the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). This allows foreign agencies to chip away at one of the toughest problems in dealing with Vietnam's drug problems - developing a cooperative counternarcotics relationship with MPS. Without a significant improvement in MPS cooperation with foreign law enforcement agencies, this project can serve as a useful conduit for better access to information and influence on decision-making, thus helping UNODC to implement the multifaceted approach to drug control as envisaged by the UNODC mandate and the UN Conventions on drug control, especially the UN Convention of 1988. With increased training, GVN law enforcement agencies should also become more aware of issues such as human rights, international dimension of criminal and drug activities, international cooperation, and mutual legal assistance. With the US-Vietnam counternarcotics agreement still pending, contributions to UNODC's Vietnam projects are a cost-effective way of advancing the mission's and USG's counternarcotics and law enforcement goals.
5. (U) Significantly, the project document includes a provision on drug profiling, where GVN authorities agree to heroin profiling being conducted by partner laboratories abroad. While the profiling is linked to heroin only in this project, it opens the door for future cooperation in other drug categories, such as ATS. This activity will enable law enforcement authorities to have a better idea from where seized heroin is coming. The GVN has been extremely reluctant to cooperate with such profiling on a bilateral basis.
6. (U) Action request: Embassy requests that INL consult with UNODC headquarters and favorably consider funding the UNODC project with the USD 500,000 available from Song Ma or from other available sources.

BURGHARDT